10: Hilger E-5 (1946-1952) 1957
SC4 Araucanians SC4
Argentina

SIZE OF FAMILIES

Childless couples were exceptions. Children in families of informants numbered 6 to 15, with boys predominating. An informant in her sixties told of large families of former years. She herself had given birth to 15 children. "There was always a baby on the way; soon after one was born, the next one was on the way." An 80-year-old woman had given birth to 15 children, all of whom reached maturity; 9 were living at the time of the present study. She added: "One couple I knew had 20 children, 18 boys and 2 girls, and all lived. That is the way it was formerly." 163

PRENATAL PERIOD

PERIOD OF GESTATION

As soon as a woman knew she was pregnant, she told her household about it, and from then on counted the months (moons) toward the birth of her child, which was expected in the ninth month. At three months the woman would say, "It is the third moon," and from then on considered the fetus a person, "like all other persons; that meant it had the spirit of a person. I do not know whether the child had a soul by that time, or not; no one can know that." 94.3 [174]

Some believe there is a flying snake that dislikes pregnant women, for "it flies about such a woman and whips her with its tail; it has never done so to me, but people say it happens."

Talking of pregnancy will not cause a woman to become pregnant, a belief held by the Araucos (Hilger, 1952a, pp. xii-xiii); but persons speaking of babies can expect someone in the kinship group to bring them a child to be reared, generally a grandchild. [17]

SEX PREFERENCE

In all probability there was, in general, no sex preference. Some informants, however, spoke of preferences. A 60-year-old woman believed that formerly boys were preferred to girls; "or why were we always so glad when it was a boy that was born; people acted as if they were very happy about it. One can observe the same today." A 70-year-old man thought it made no difference; that boys and girls were equally welcome; the thing of importance was that the child came into the world and that the mother did not take sick. An 80-year-old woman would say, "Something is coming; we shall wait to see what it is." But she preferred girls, since a daughter helps her mother and is more of a companion to her than a son. A Trumpul 94.2